

Lenin

**A GREAT BEGINNING
HOW TO ORGANISE COMPETITION?**

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Workers of All Countries, Unite!

V. I. Lenin

A Great Beginning

Heroism of the Workers in the Rear.

"Communist Subbotniks"

How To Organise Competition?

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A GREAT BEGINNING

Heroism of the Workers in the Rear. "Communist Subbotniks"

The press reports many instances of the heroism of the Red Army men. In the fight against Kolchak, Denikin and other forces of the landowners and capitalists, the workers and peasants very often display miracles of bravery and endurance, defending the gains of the socialist revolution. The guerrilla spirit, weariness and indiscipline are being overcome, it is a slow and difficult process, but it is making headway in spite of everything. The heroism of the working people making voluntary sacrifices for the victory of socialism—this is the foundation of the new, comradely discipline in the Red Army, the foundation on which that army is regenerating, gaining strength and growing.

The heroism of the workers in the rear is no less worthy of attention. In this connection, the *communist subbotniks* organised by the workers on their own initiative are really of enormous significance. Evidently, this is only a beginning, but it is a beginning of exceptionally great importance. It is the beginning of a revolution that is more difficult, more tangible, more radical and more decisive than the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, for it is a victory over our own conservatism, indiscipline, petty bourgeois egoism, a victory over the habits left as a heritage to the worker and peasant by accursed capitalism. Only when *this* victory is consolidated will the new social discipline, socialist discipline, be created, then and only then will a reversion to capitalism become impossible, will communism become really invincible.

Pravda in its issue of May 17 published an article by A. J. entitled "Work in a Revolutionary Way. A Communist Saturday". This article is so important that we reproduce it here in full.

"WORK IN A REVOLUTIONARY WAY "A COMMUNIST SATURDAY

"The letter of the Russian Communist Party's Central Committee on working in a *revolutionary way* was a powerful stimulus to communist organisations and to Communists. The general wave of enthusiasm carried many communist railway workers to the front, but the majority of them could not leave their responsible posts or find new forms of working in a revolutionary way. Reports from the localities about the tardiness with which the work of mobilisation was proceeding and the prevalence of red tape compelled the Moscow Kazan Railway district to turn its attention to the way the railway was functioning. It turned out that, owing to the shortage of labour and low productivity of labour, urgent orders and repairs to locomotives were being held up. At a general meeting of Communists and sympathisers of the Moscow Kazan Railway district held on May 7, the question was raised of passing from words to deeds in helping to achieve victory over Kolchak. The following resolution was moved:

"In view of the grave domestic and foreign situation, Communists and sympathisers, in order to gain the upper hand over the class enemy, must spur themselves on again and deduct an extra hour from their rest, i.e., lengthen their working day by one hour, accumulate these extra hours and put in six extra hours of manual labour on Saturday for the purpose of creating real values of immediate worth. Since Communists must not grudge their health and life for the gains of the revolution, this work should be performed without pay. *Communist Saturdays* are to be introduced throughout the district and to continue until complete victory over Kolchak has been achieved."

"After some hesitation, the resolution was adopted unanimously."

"On Saturday, May 10, at 6 p.m., the Communists and sympathisers turned up to work like soldiers, formed ranks, and without fuss or bustle were taken by the foremen to the various jobs."

"The results of working in a *revolutionary way* are evident. The accompanying table gives the places of work and the character of the work performed [See p. 7—Ed.]

"The total value of the work performed at ordinary rates of pay is five million rubles, calculated at overtime rates it would be fifty per cent higher."

"The productivity of labour in loading waggons was 270 per cent higher than that of regular workers. The productivity of labour on other jobs was approximately the same."

"Jobs (urgent) were done which had been held up for periods ranging from seven days to three months owing to the shortage of labour and to red tape."

"The work was done in spite of the state of disrepair (easily remedied) of implements, as a result of which certain groups were held up from thirty to forty minutes."

"The administration left in charge of the work could hardly keep pace with the men in finding new jobs for them, and perhaps it was only a slight exaggeration when an old foreman said that as much work was done at this *communist Saturday* as would have been done in a week by non class conscious and slack workers."

Place of work	Character of work	Number employed	Hours worked		Work performed
			Per person	Total	
Moscow Main locomotive shops	Loading materials for the line devices for repairing locomotives and carriage parts for Perovo, Murom, Alatyr and Syzran	48	5	240	Loaded 7,500 poods
		21	3	63	Unloaded 1,800 poods
		5	4	20	
Moscow Passenger depot	Complex current repairs to locomotives	26	5	130	Repairs done on 1½ locomotives
Moscow Shunting yards	Current repairs to locomotives	24	6	144	2 locomotives completed and parts to be repaired dismantled on 4
Moscow Carriage department	Current repairs to passenger carriages	12	6	72	2 third class carriages
Perovo, Main carriage workshops	Carriage repairs and minor repairs on Saturday and Sunday	46	5	230	12 box carriages and two flat carriages
		23	5	115	
	Total	200		1 014	4 locomotives and 16 carriages turned out and 9 300 poods unloaded and loaded

"In view of the fact that many non Communists, sincere supporters of the Soviet government, took part in the work, and that many more are expected on future Saturdays, and also in view of the fact that many other districts desire to follow the example of the communist railway workers of the Moscow Kazan Railway, I shall deal in greater detail with the organisational side of the matter as seen from reports received from the localities

'Of those taking part in the work, some ten per cent were Communists permanently employed in the localities. The rest were persons

occupying responsible and elective posts, from the commissar of the railway to commissars of individual enterprises, representatives of the trade union, and employees of the head office and of the Commissariat of Railways

"The enthusiasm and team spirit displayed during work were extraordinary. When the workers, clerks and head office employees, without even an oath or argument, caught hold of the forty pood wheel-tire of a passenger locomotive and, like industrious ants, rolled it into place, one's heart was filled with fervent joy at the sight of this collective effort, and one's conviction was strengthened that the victory of the working class was unshakable. The international bandits will not crush the victorious workers, the internal saboteurs will not live to see Kolchak

"When the work was finished those present witnessed an unprecedented scene: a hundred Communists, weary, but with the light of joy in their eyes, greeted their success with the solemn strains of the *Internationale*. And it seemed as if the triumphant strains of the triumphant anthem would sweep over the walls through the whole of working-class Moscow and that like the waves caused by a stone thrown into a pool they would spread through the whole of working-class Russia and shake up the weary and the slack

"A. J."

Appraising this remarkable "example worthy of emulation", Comrade N. R. in an article in *Pravda* of May 20, under that heading, wrote

"Cases of Communists working like this are not rare. I know of similar cases at an electric power station, and on various railways. On the Nikolayevskaya Railway, the Communists worked overtime several nights to lift a locomotive that had fallen into the turn-table pit. In the winter, all the Communists and sympathisers on the Northern Railway worked several Sundays clearing the track of snow, and the communist cells at many goods stations patrol the stations at night to prevent stealing. But all this work was casual and unsystematic. The comrades on the Moscow-Kazan line are making this work systematic and permanent, and this is new. They say in their resolution, 'until complete victory over Kolchak has been achieved, and therein lies the significance of their work. They are lengthening the working day of every Communist and sympathiser by one hour for the duration of the state of war, simultaneously, their productivity of labour is exemplary.

"This example has called forth and is bound to call forth further emulation. A general meeting of the Communists and sympathisers on the Alexandrovskaya Railway, after discussing the military situation and the resolution adopted by the comrades on the Moscow-Kazan Railway, resolved (1) to introduce 'subbotniks' for the Communists and sympathisers on the Alexandrovskaya Railway, the first subbotnik to take place on May 17, (2) to organise the Communists and sympathisers in exemplary, model teams which must show the workers how to work and what can really be done with the present materials and tools, and in the present food situation

"The Moscow Kazan comrades say that their example has made a great impression and that they expect a large number of *non Party* workers to turn up next Saturday. At the time these lines are being written, the Communists have not yet started working overtime in the Alexandrovskaya Railway workshops but as soon as the rumour spread that they were to do so the mass of non Party workers stirred themselves. 'We did not know yesterday, otherwise we would have worked as well!' 'I will certainly come next Saturday,' can be heard on all sides. The impression created by work of this sort is very great.

"The example set by the Moscow Kazan comrades should be emulated by all the communist cells in the rear, not only the communist cells at Moscow Junction, but the whole Party organisation in Russia. In the rural districts too, the communist cells should in the first place set to work to till the fields of Red Army men and thus help their families.

"The comrades on the Moscow Kazan line finished their first communist subbotnik by singing the *Internationale*. If the communist organisations throughout Russia follow this example and consistently apply it, the Russian Soviet Republic will successfully weather the coming severe months to the mighty strains of the *Internationale* sung by all the working people of the Republic.

"To work, communist comrades!"

On May 23, 1919, *Pravda* reported the following

"The first communist 'subbotnik' on the Alexandrovskaya Railway took place on May 17. In accordance with the resolution adopted by their general meeting, ninety eight Communists and sympathisers worked five hours overtime without pay, receiving in return only the right to purchase a second dinner, and, as manual labourers, half a pound of bread to go with their dinner."

Although the work was poorly prepared and organised the *productivity of labour was nevertheless from two to three times higher than usual*.

Here are a few examples

Five turners turned eighty spindles in four hours. The productivity is 213 per cent of the usual level.

Twenty unskilled workers in four hours collected scrap materials of a total weight of 600 poods, and seventy laminated carriage springs, each weighing $3\frac{1}{2}$ poods, making a total of 850 poods. Productivity, 300 per cent of the usual level.

"The comrades explain this by the fact that ordinarily their work is boring and tiresome, whereas here they worked with a will and with enthusiasm. Now, however, they will be ashamed to turn out less in regular working hours than they did at the communist subbotnik."

"Now many non Party workers say that they would like to take part in the subbotniks. The locomotive crews volunteer to take locomotives

from the 'cemetery', during a subbotnik, repair them and set them going

"It is reported that similar subbotniks are to be organised on the Vyazma line"

How the work is done at these communist subbotniks is described by Comrade A Dyachenko in an article in *Pravda* of June 7, entitled "Notes of a Subbotnik Worker" We quote the main passages from this article

"A comrade and I were very pleased to go and do our 'bit' in the subbotnik arranged by a decision of the railway district committee of the Party, for a time, for a few hours, I would give my head a rest and my muscles a bit of exercise We were detailed off to the railway carpentry shop We got there, found a number of our people, exchanged greetings, engaged in banter for a bit, counted up our forces and found that there were thirty of us And in front of us lay a 'monster', a steam boiler weighing no less than six or seven hundred pounds, our job was to 'shift' it, i.e., move it over a distance of a quarter or a third of a verst, to its base We began to have our doubts However, we started on the job Some comrades placed wooden rollers under the boiler, attached two ropes to it and we began to tug away The boiler gave way reluctantly, but at length it budged We were delighted After all, there were so few of us For nearly two weeks this boiler had resisted the efforts of thrice our number of non communist workers and nothing could make it budge until we tackled it We worked for an hour, strenuously, rhythmically, to the command of our 'foreman'—'one, two, three', and the boiler kept on rolling Suddenly there was confusion, and a number of our comrades went tumbling on to the ground in the funniest fashion. The rope let them down... A moment's delay, and a thicker rope was made fast Evening It was getting dark, but we had yet to negotiate a small hillock, and then our job would soon be done. Our arms ached, our palms burned, we were hot and pulled for all we were worth—and were making headway The 'management' stood round and somewhat shamed by our success, clutched at a rope 'Lend a hand, it's time you did' A Red Army man was watching our labours, in his hands he held an accordion. What was he thinking? Who were these people? Why should they work on Saturday when everybody was at home? I solved his riddle and said to him 'Comrade, play us a jolly tune We are not raw hands we are real Communists Don't you see how fast the work is going under our hands? We are not lazy, we are pulling for all we are worth' In response, the Red Army man carefully put his accordion on the ground and hastened to grab at a rope end

"Suddenly Comrade U struck up the workers' song 'Dubinushka' '*anglichanin mudrets*' he sang, in an excellent tenor voice and we all joined in the refrain of this labour shanty '*Eh, dubinushka, ukhnem, podyornem podyornem*'

"We were unaccustomed to the work, our muscles were weary, our shoulders, our backs ached. but the next day would be a free day, our day of rest, and we would be able to get all the sleep we wanted. The goal was near, and after a little hesitation, our 'monster' rolled al-

most right up to the base 'Put some boards under, raise it on the base, and let the boiler do the work that has long been expected of it' We went off in a crowd to the club room' of the local Party cell The room was brightly lit, the walls decorated with posters, rifles stacked around the room After lustily singing the *Internationale* we enjoyed a glass of tea and 'rum', and even bread This treat, given us by the local comrades, was very welcome after our arduous toil We took a brotherly farewell of our comrades and lined up The strains of revolutionary songs echoed through the slumbering streets in the silence of the night and our measured tread kept time with the music We sang 'Comrades, the Bugles Are Sounding', 'Arise Ye Starvelings from Your Slumbers', songs of the International and of labour

"A week passed Our arms and shoulders were back to normal and we were going to another 'subbotnik, nine versts away this time, to repair railway waggons Our destination was Perovo The comrades climbed on the roof of an 'American' box waggon and sang the *Internationale* well and with gusto The people on the train listened to the singing, evidently in surprise The wheels knocked a measured beat, and those of us who failed to get on to the roof clung to the steps, pretending to be 'devil may care' passengers The train pulled in We had reached our destination. We passed through a long yard and were warmly greeted by the commissar, Comrade G

"There is plenty of work, but few to do it! Only thirty of us and in six hours we have to do average repairs to a baker's dozen of waggons! Here are twin wheels already marked We have not only empty waggons, but also a filled cistern. But that's nothing, we'll "make a job of it", comrades"

"Work went with a swing Five comrades and I were working with hoists. Under pressure of our shoulders and two hoists, and directed by our 'foreman', these twin wheels, weighing from sixty to seventy poods apiece, skipped from one track to another in the liveliest possible manner One pair disappeared, another rolled into place At last all were in their assigned places, and swiftly we shifted the old worn-out junk into a shed One, two, three—and, raised by a revolving iron hoist, they were dislodged from the rails in a trice Over there, in the dark, we heard the rapid strokes of hammers, the comrades, like worker bees were busy on their 'sick' cars Some were carpentering, other painting, still others were covering roofs, to the joy of the comrade commissar and our own. The smiths also asked for our aid. In a portable smithy a rod with a coupling hook was gleaming white-hot, it had been bent by careless shunting It was laid on the anvil, scattering white sparks, and, under the experienced direction of the smith, our trusty hammers beat it back into its proper shape. Still red-hot and spitting sparks, we rushed it on our shoulders to where it had to go We pushed it into its socket. A few hammer strokes and it was fixed. We crawled under the waggon. The coupling system is not as simple as it looks, there are all sorts of contraptions with rivets and springs

"Work was in full swing Night was falling The torches seemed to burn brighter than before. Soon it would be time to knock off Some of the comrades were taking a 'rest' against some tires and 'sipping' hot tea. The May night was cool and the new moon shone beautiful ly like a gleaming sickle in the sky People were laughing and joking

" 'Knock off, Comrade G, thirteen waggons are enough'
"But Comrade G was not satisfied
"We finished our tea, broke into our songs of triumph, and marched to the door "

The movement of "communist subbotniks" is not confined to Moscow *Pravda* of June 6 reported the following

"The first communist subbotnik in Tver took place on May 31. One hundred and twenty eight Communists worked on the railway. In three and a half hours they loaded and unloaded fourteen waggons, repaired three locomotives, cut up ten sagues of firewood and performed other work. The productivity of labour of the skilled communist workers was thirteen times above normal."

Again, on June 8 we read in *Pravda*

"COMMUNIST SUBBOTNIKS

"Saratov, June 5. In response to the appeal of their Moscow comrades, the communist railway workers here at a general Party meeting resolved to work five hours overtime on Saturdays without pay in order to support the national economy."

* * *

I have given the fullest and most detailed information about the communist subbotniks because in this we undoubtedly observe one of the most important aspects of communist construction, to which our press pays insufficient attention, and which all of us have as yet failed properly to appreciate.

Less political fireworks and more attention to the simplest but living facts of communist construction, taken from and tested by actual life—this is the slogan which all of us, our writers, agitators, propagandists, organisers, etc., should repeat unceasingly.

It was natural and inevitable in the first period after the proletarian revolution that we should be engaged primarily on the main and fundamental task of overcoming the resistance of the bourgeoisie, of vanquishing the exploiters, of crushing their conspiracy (like the "slave owners' conspiracy" to surrender Petrograd, in which all from the Black Hundreds and Cadets to the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were involved¹). But simultaneously with this

task, another task comes to the forefront just as inevitably and ever more imperatively as time goes on, namely, the more important task of positive communist construction, the creation of new economic relations, of a new society

As I have had occasion to point out more than once, among other occasions in the speech I delivered at a session of the Petrograd Soviet on March 12, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not only the use of force against the exploiters, and not even mainly the use of force. The economic foundation of this use of revolutionary force, the guarantee of its effectiveness and success is the fact that the proletariat represents and creates a higher type of social organisation of labour compared with capitalism. This is what is important, this is the source of the strength and the guarantee that the final triumph of communism is inevitable.

The feudal organisation of social labour rested on the discipline of the bludgeon, while the working people, robbed and tyrannised by a handful of landowners, were utterly ignorant and downtrodden. The capitalist organisation of social labour rested on the discipline of hunger, and, notwithstanding all the progress of bourgeois culture and bourgeois democracy, the vast mass of the working people in the most advanced, civilised and democratic republics remained an ignorant and downtrodden mass of wage slaves or oppressed peasants, robbed and tyrannised by a handful of capitalists. The communist organisation of social labour, the first step towards which is socialism, rests, and will do so more and more as time goes on, on the free and conscious discipline of the working people themselves who have thrown off the yoke both of the landowners and capitalists.

This new discipline does not drop from the skies, nor is it born from pious wishes, it grows out of the material conditions of large scale capitalist production, and out of them alone. Without them it is impossible. And the repository, or the vehicle, of these material conditions is a definite historical class, created, organised, united, trained, educated and hardened by large scale capitalism. This class is the proletariat.

If we translate the Latin, scientific, historico philosophical term "dictatorship of the proletariat" into simpler language, it means just the following:

Only a definite class, namely, the urban workers and the factory, industrial workers in general, is able to lead the

whole mass of the working and exploited people in the struggle to throw off the yoke of capital, in actually carrying it out, in the struggle to maintain and consolidate the victory, in the work of creating the new, socialist social system and in the entire struggle for the complete abolition of classes (Let us observe in parenthesis that the only scientific distinction between socialism and communism is that the first term implies the first stage of the new society arising out of capitalism, while the second implies the next and higher stage)

The mistake the "Berne" yellow International² makes is that its leaders accept the class struggle and the leading role of the proletariat only in word and are afraid to think it out to its logical conclusion. They are afraid of that inevitable conclusion which particularly terrifies the bourgeoisie, and which is absolutely unacceptable to them. They are afraid to admit that the dictatorship of the proletariat is *also* a period of class struggle, which is inevitable as long as classes have not been abolished, and which changes in form, being particularly fierce and particularly peculiar in the period immediately following the overthrow of capital. The proletariat does not cease the class struggle after it has captured political power, but continues it until classes are abolished—of course, under different circumstances, in different form and by different means.

And what does the "abolition of classes" mean? All those who call themselves socialists recognise this as the ultimate goal of socialism, but by no means all give thought to its significance. Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy.

Clearly, in order to abolish classes completely, it is not enough to overthrow the exploiters, the landowners and capitalists, not enough to abolish *their* rights of ownership, it is necessary also to abolish *all* private ownership of the means of production, it is necessary to abolish the distinction be

tween town and country, as well as the distinction between manual workers and brain workers. This requires a very long period of time. In order to achieve this an enormous step forward must be taken in developing the productive forces, it is necessary to overcome the resistance (frequently passive, which is particularly stubborn and particularly difficult to overcome) of the numerous survivals of small scale production, it is necessary to overcome the enormous force of habit and conservatism which are connected with these survivals.

The assumption that all "working people" are equally capable of doing this work would be an empty phrase, or the illusion of an antediluvian, pre Marxist socialist, for this ability does not come of itself, but grows historically, and grows *only* out of the material conditions of large scale capitalist production. This ability, at the beginning of the road from capitalism to socialism, is possessed by the proletariat *alone*. It is capable of fulfilling the gigantic task that confronts it, first, because it is the strongest and most advanced class in civilised societies, secondly, because in the most developed countries it constitutes the majority of the population, and thirdly, because in backward capitalist countries, like Russia, the majority of the population consists of semi proletarians, i.e., of people who regularly live in a proletarian way part of the year, who regularly earn a part of their means of subsistence as wage workers in capitalist enterprises.

Those who try to solve the problems involved in the transition from capitalism to socialism on the basis of general talk about liberty, equality, democracy in general, equality of labour democracy, etc (as Kautsky, Martov and other heroes of the Berne yellow International do), thereby only reveal their petty bourgeois, philistine nature and ideologically slavishly follow in the wake of the bourgeoisie. The correct solution of this problem can be found only in a concrete study of the specific relations between the specific class which has conquered political power, namely, the proletariat, and the whole non proletarian, and also semi proletarian, mass of the working population—relations which do not take shape in fantastically harmonious, "ideal" conditions, but in the real conditions of the frantic resistance of the bourgeoisie which assumes many and diverse forms.

The vast majority of the population—and all the more so

of the working population—of any capitalist country, including Russia, have thousands of times experienced, themselves and through their kith and kin, the oppression of capital, the plunder and every sort of tyranny it perpetrates. The imperialist war, i.e., the slaughter of ten million people in order to decide whether British or German capital was to have supremacy in plundering the whole world, has greatly intensified these ordeals, has increased and deepened them, and has made the people realise their meaning. Hence the inevitable sympathy displayed by the vast majority of the population, particularly the working people, for the proletariat, because it is with heroic courage and revolutionary ruthlessness throwing off the yoke of capital, overthrowing the exploiters, suppressing their resistance, and shedding its blood to pave the road for the creation of the new society, in which there will be no room for exploiters.

Great and inevitable as may be their petty bourgeois vacillations and their tendency to go back to bourgeois "order", under the "wing" of the bourgeoisie, the non proletarian and semi proletarian mass of the working population cannot but recognise the moral and political authority of the proletariat, who are not only overthrowing the exploiters and suppressing their resistance, but are building a new and higher social bond, a social discipline, the discipline of class conscious and united working people, who know no yoke and no authority except the authority of their own unity, of their own, more class-conscious, bold, solid, revolutionary and steadfast vanguard.

In order to achieve victory, in order to build and consolidate socialism, the proletariat must fulfil a two fold or dual task: first, it must, by its supreme heroism in the revolutionary struggle against capital, win over the entire mass of the working and exploited people, it must win them over, organise them and lead them in the struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie and utterly suppress their resistance. Secondly, it must lead the whole mass of the working and exploited people, as well as all the petty bourgeois groups, on to the road of new economic development, towards the creation of a new social bond, a new labour discipline, a new organisation of labour, which will combine the last word in science and capitalist technology with the mass association of class conscious workers creating large scale socialist industry.

The second task is more difficult than the first, for it can not possibly be fulfilled by single acts of heroic fervour, it requires the most prolonged, most persistent and most difficult mass heroism in *plain, everyday* work. But this task is more essential than the first, because, in the last analysis, the deepest source of strength for victories over the bourgeoisie and the sole guarantee of the durability and permanence of these victories can only be a new and higher mode of social production, the substitution of large scale socialist production for capitalist and petty bourgeois production

* * *

"Communist subbotniks" are of such enormous historical significance precisely because they demonstrate the conscious and voluntary initiative of the workers in developing the productivity of labour, in adopting a new labour discipline, in creating socialist conditions of economy and life

J. Jacoby, one of the few, in fact it would be more correct to say one of the exceptionally rare, German bourgeois democrats who, after the lessons of 18/0 /1, went over not to chauvinism or national liberalism, but to socialism, once said that the formation of a single trade union was of greater historical importance than the battle of Sadowa.³ This is true. The battle of Sadowa decided the supremacy of one of two bourgeois monarchies, the Austrian or the Prussian, in creating a German national capitalist state. The formation of one trade union was a small step towards the world victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie. And we may similarly say that the first communist subbotnik, organised by the workers of the Moscow Kazan Railway in Moscow on May 10, 1919, was of greater historical significance than any of the victories of Hindenburg, or of Foch and the British, in the 1914-18 imperialist war. The victories of the imperialists mean the slaughter of millions of workers for the sake of the profits of the Anglo American and French multimillionaires, they are the atrocities of doomed capitalism, bloated with over eating and rotting alive. The communist subbotnik organised by the workers of the Moscow Kazan Railway is one of the cells of the new, socialist society, which brings to all the peoples of the earth emancipation from the yoke of capital and from wars.

The bourgeois gentlemen and their hangers on, including the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, who are wont to regard themselves as the representatives of "public opinion", naturally jeer at the hopes of the Communists, call those hopes "a baobab tree in a mignonette pot", sneer at the insignificance of the number of subbotniks compared with the vast number of cases of thieving, idleness, lower productivity, spoilage of raw materials and finished goods, etc. Our reply to these gentlemen is that if the bourgeois intellectuals had dedicated their knowledge to assisting the working people instead of giving it to the Russian and foreign capitalists in order to restore their power, the revolution would have proceeded more rapidly and more peacefully. But this is utopian, for the issue is decided by the class struggle, and the majority of the intellectuals gravitate towards the bourgeoisie. Not with the assistance of the intellectuals will the proletariat achieve victory, but in spite of their opposition (at least in the majority of cases), removing those of them who are incorrigibly bourgeois, reforming, re educating and subordinating the waverers, and gradually winning ever larger sections of them to its side. Gloating over the difficulties and setbacks of the revolution, sowing panic, preaching a return to the past—these are all weapons and methods of class struggle of the bourgeois intellectuals. The proletariat will not allow itself to be deceived by them.

If we get down to brass tacks, however, has it ever happened in history that a new mode of production has taken root immediately, without a long succession of setbacks, blunders and relapses? Half a century after the abolition of serfdom there were still quite a number of survivals of serfdom in the Russian countryside. Half a century after the abolition of slavery in America the position of the Negroes was still very often one of semi slavery. The bourgeois intellectuals, including the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, are true to themselves in serving capital and in continuing to use absolutely false arguments—before the proletarian revolution they accused us of being utopian, after the revolution they demand that we wipe out all traces of the past with fantastic rapidity!

We are not utopians, however, and we know the real value of bourgeois "arguments", we also know that for some time after the revolution traces of the old ethics will inevitably predominate over the young shoots of the new. When the new

has just been born the old always remains stronger than it for some time, this is always the case in nature and in social life. Jeering at the feebleness of the young shoots of the new order, cheap scepticism of the intellectuals and the like—these are, essentially, methods of bourgeois class struggle against the proletariat, a defence of capitalism against socialism. We must carefully study the feeble new shoots, we must devote the greatest attention to them, do every thing to promote their growth and “nurse” them. Some of them will inevitably perish. We cannot vouch that precisely the “communist subbotniks” will play a particularly important role. But that is not the point. The point is to foster each and every shoot of the new, and life will select the most viable. If the Japanese scientist, in order to help mankind vanquish syphilis, had the patience to test six hundred and five preparations before he developed a six hundred and sixth which met definite requirements, then those who want to solve a more difficult problem, namely, to vanquish capitalism, must have the perseverance to try hundreds and thousands of new methods, means and weapons of struggle in order to elaborate the most suitable of them.

The “communist subbotniks” are so important because they were initiated by workers who were by no means placed in exceptionally good conditions, by workers of various specialities, and some with no speciality at all, just unskilled labourers, who are living under *ordinary*, i.e., *exceedingly hard*, conditions. We all know very well the main cause of the decline in the productivity of labour that is to be observed not only in Russia, but all over the world, it is ruin and impoverishment, embitterment and weariness caused by the imperialist war, sickness and malnutrition. The latter is first in importance. Starvation—that is the cause. And in order to do away with starvation, productivity of labour must be raised in agriculture, in transport and in industry. So, we get a sort of vicious circle: in order to raise productivity of labour we must save ourselves from starvation, and in order to save ourselves from starvation we must raise productivity of labour.

We know that in practice such contradictions are solved by breaking the vicious circle, by bringing about a radical change in the temper of the people, by the heroic initiative of the individual groups which often plays a decisive role against the background of such a radical change. The

unskilled labourers and railway workers of Moscow (of course, we have in mind the majority of them, and not a handful of profiteers, officials and other whiteguards) are working people who are living in desperately hard conditions. They are constantly underfed, and now, before the new harvest is gathered, with the general worsening of the food situation, they are actually starving. And yet these starving workers, surrounded by the malicious counter revolutionary agitation of the bourgeoisie, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries, are organising "communist subbotniks", working overtime *without any pay*, and achieving *an enormous increase in the productivity of labour* in spite of the fact that they are weary, tormented, and exhausted by malnutrition. Is this not supreme heroism? Is this not the beginning of a change of momentous significance?

In the last analysis, productivity of labour is the most important, the principal thing for the victory of the new social system. Capitalism created a productivity of labour unknown under serfdom. Capitalism can be utterly vanquished, and will be utterly vanquished by socialism creating a new and much higher productivity of labour. This is a very difficult matter and must take a long time, but *it has been started*, and that is the main thing. If in starving Moscow, in the summer of 1919, the starving workers who had gone through four trying years of imperialist war and another year and a half of still more trying civil war could start this great work, how will things develop later when we triumph in the civil war and win peace?

Communism is the higher productivity of labour—compared with that existing under capitalism—of voluntary, class conscious and united workers employing advanced techniques. Communist subbotniks are extraordinarily valuable as the *actual* beginning of *communism*, and this is a very rare thing, because we are in a stage when "only the *first steps* in the transition from capitalism to communism are being taken" (as our Party Programme⁴ quite rightly says).

Communism begins when the *rank and file workers* display an enthusiastic concern that is undaunted by arduous toil to increase the productivity of labour, husband *every pood of gram, coal, iron* and other products, which do not accrue to the workers personally or to their "close" kith and kin, but to their "distant" kith and kin, i.e., to society as a

whole, to tens and hundreds of millions of people united first in one socialist state, and then in a union of Soviet republics

In *Capital*, Karl Marx ridicules the pompous and grandiloquent bourgeois democratic great charter of liberty and the rights of man, ridicules all this phrase mongering about liberty, equality and fraternity *in general*, which dazzles the petty bourgeois and philistines of all countries, including the present despicable heroes of the despicable Berne International. Marx contrasts these pompous declarations of rights to the plain, modest, practical, simple manner in which the question is presented by the proletariat—the legislative enactment of a shorter working day is a typical example of such treatment.⁵ The aptness and profundity of Marx's observation become the clearer and more obvious to us the more the content of the proletarian revolution unfolds. The 'formulas' of genuine communism differ from the pompous intricate, and solemn phraseology of the Kautskys, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries and their beloved "brethren" of Berne in that they reduce everything to the *conditions of labour*. Less chatter about "labour democracy", about "liberty, equality and fraternity", about "government by the people", and all such stuff, the class conscious workers and peasants of our day see through these pompous phrases of the bourgeois intellectual and discern the trickery as easily as a person of ordinary common sense and experience, when glancing at the irreproachably "polished" features and immaculate appearance of the "fain fellow, dontcher know", immediately and unerringly puts him down as 'in all probability, a scoundrel'.

Fewer pompous phrases, more plain, *everyday* work, concern for the pood of grain and the pood of coal! More concern about providing this pood of grain and pood of coal needed by the hungry workers and ragged and barefoot peasants *not* by *haggling*, not in a capitalist manner, but by the conscious, voluntary, boundlessly heroic labour of plain working men like the unskilled labourers and railwaymen of the Moscow Kazan line.

We must all admit that vestiges of the bourgeois intellectual phrase mongering approach to questions of the revolution are in evidence at every step, everywhere, even in our own ranks. Our press, for example, does little to fight these rotten survivals of the rotten, bourgeois democratic past, it

does little to foster the simple, modest, ordinary but viable shoots of genuine communism

Take the position of women. In this field, not a single democratic party in the world, not even in the most advanced bourgeois republic, has done in decades so much as a hundredth part of what we did in our very first year in power. We really razed to the ground the infamous laws placing women in a position of inequality, restricting divorce and surrounding it with disgusting formalities, denying recognition to children born out of wedlock, enforcing a search for their fathers, etc., laws numerous survivals of which, to the shame of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism, are to be found in all civilised countries. We have a thousand times the right to be proud of what we have done in this field. But the more *thoroughly* we have cleared the ground of the lumber of the old, bourgeois laws and institutions, the clearer it is to us that we have only cleared the ground to build on but are not yet building.

Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating woman, she continues to be a *domestic slave*, because *petty housework* crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real *emancipation of women*, real communism, will begin only where and when an all out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding the state power) against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its *wholesale transformation* into a large scale socialist economy begins.

Do we in practice pay sufficient attention to this question, which in theory every Communist considers indisputable? Of course not. Do we take proper care of the *shoots* of communism which already exist in this sphere? Again the answer is *no*. Public catering establishments, nurseries, kindergartens—here we have examples of these shoots, here we have the simple, everyday means, involving nothing pompous, grandiloquent or ceremonial, which can *really emancipate women*, really lessen and abolish their inequality with men as regards their role in social production and public life. These means are not new, they (like all the material prerequisites for socialism) were created by large scale capitalism. But under capitalism they remained, first, a rarity, and secondly—which is particularly important—either *profit*

making enterprises, with all the worst features of speculation, profiteering, cheating and fraud, or "acrobatics of bourgeois charity", which the best workers rightly hated and despised

There is no doubt that the number of these institutions in our country has increased enormously and that they are *beginning* to change in character. There is no doubt that we have far more *organising talent* among the working and peasant women than we are aware of, that we have far more people than we know of who can organise practical work, with the co operation of large numbers of workers and of still larger numbers of consumers, without that abundance of talk, fuss, squabbling and chatter about plans, systems, etc, with which our big headed "intellectuals" or half baked "Communists" are "affected". But we *do not nurse* these shoots of the new as we should

Look at the bourgeoisie. How very well they know how to advertise what *they* need! See how millions of copies of *their* newspapers extol what the capitalists regard as "model" enterprises, and how "model" bourgeois institutions are made an object of national pride! Our press does not take the trouble, or hardly ever, to describe the best catering establishments or nurseries, in order, by daily insistence, to get some of them turned into models of their kind. It does not give them enough publicity, does not describe in detail the saving in human labour, the conveniences for the consumer, the economy of products, the emancipation of women from domestic slavery, the improvement in sanitary conditions, that can be achieved with *exemplary communist work* and extended to the whole of society, to all working people

Exemplary production, exemplary communist subbotniks, exemplary care and conscientiousness in procuring and distributing every pood of grain, exemplary catering establishments, exemplary cleanliness in such and such a workers' house, in such and such a block, should all receive ten times more attention and care from our press, as well as from *every* workers' and peasants' organisation, than they receive now. All these are shoots of communism, and it is our common and primary duty to nurse them. Difficult as our food and production situation is, in the year and a half of Bolshevik rule there has been undoubted progress *all along the line*. Grain procurements have increased from 30 million poods

(from August 1, 1917 to August 1, 1918) to 100 million poods (from August 1, 1918 to May 1, 1919), vegetable gardening has expanded, the margin of unsown land has diminished, railway transport has begun to improve despite the enormous fuel difficulties, and so on. Against this general background, and with the support of the proletarian state power, the shoots of communism will not wither, they will grow and blossom into complete communism.

* * *

We must give very great thought to the significance of the "communist subbotniks", in order that we may draw all the very important practical lessons that follow from this great beginning.

The first and main lesson is that this beginning must be given every assistance. The word "commune" is being handled much too freely. Any kind of enterprise started by Communists or with their participation is very often at once declared to be a "commune", it being not infrequently forgotten that this *very honourable title* must be *won* by prolonged and persistent effort, by *practical* achievement in genuine communist development.

That is why, in my opinion, the decision that has matured in the minds of the majority of the members of the Central Executive Committee to *repeal* the decree of the Council of People's Commissars, as far as it pertains to the title "consumers' communes"⁶, is quite right. Let the title be simpler—and, incidentally, the defects and shortcomings of the *initial* stages of the new organisational work will not be blamed on the "communes", but (as in all fairness they should be) on *bad* Communists. It would be a good thing to eliminate the word "commune" from *common* use, to prohibit every Tom, Dick and Harry from grabbing at it, or to *allow this title to be borne only* by genuine communes, which have really demonstrated in practice (and have proved by the unanimous recognition of the whole of the surrounding population) that they are capable of organising their work in a communist manner. First show that you are capable of working without remuneration in the interests of society, in the interests of all the working people, show that you are capable of "working in a revolutionary way", that you are capable of raising productivity of labour, of organising the work in

an exemplary manner, and then hold out your hand for the honourable title "commune"!

In this respect, the "communist subbotniks" are a most valuable exception, for the unskilled labourers and railwaymen of the Moscow Kazan Railway *first demonstrated by deeds* that they are capable of working like *Communists*, and then adopted the title of "communist subbotniks" for their undertaking. We must see to it and make sure that in future anyone who calls his enterprise, institution or undertaking a commune *without having proved* this by hard work and practical *success in prolonged effort*, by exemplary and truly communist organisation, is mercilessly ridiculed and pilloried as a charlatan or a windbag.

That great beginning, the "communist subbotniks", must also be utilised for another purpose, namely, to *purge* the Party. In the early period following the revolution, when the mass of "honest" and philistine minded people was particularly timorous, and when the bourgeois intellectuals to a man, including, of course, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, played the lackey to the bourgeoisie and carried on sabotage, it was absolutely inevitable that adventurers and other pernicious elements should hitch themselves to the ruling party. There never has been, and there never can be a revolution without that. The whole point is that the ruling party should be able, relying on a sound and strong advanced class, to purge its ranks.

We started this work long ago. It must be continued steadily and untiringly. The mobilisation of Communists for the war helped us in this respect: the cowards and scoundrels fled from the Party's ranks. Good riddance! Such a reduction in the Party's membership means an *enormous increase* in its strength and weight. We must continue the purge, and that new beginning, the "communist subbotniks", must be utilised for this purpose: members should be accepted into the Party only after six months', say, "trial", or "probation", at "working in a revolutionary way". A similar test should be demanded of *all* members of the Party who joined after October 25, 1917, and who have not proved by some special work or service that they are absolutely reliable, loyal and capable of being Communists.

The purging of the Party, through the steadily *increasing demands* it makes in regard to working in a genuinely communist way, will improve the state *apparatus* and will bring

much nearer the *final transition* of the peasants to the side of the revolutionary proletariat

Incidentally, the "communist subbotniks" have thrown a remarkably strong light on the class character of the state apparatus under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Central Committee of the Party drafts a letter on "working in a revolutionary way"⁷. The idea is suggested by the Central Committee of a party with from 100,000 to 200,000 members (I assume that that is the number that will remain after a thorough purging, at present the membership is larger)

The idea is taken up by the workers organised in trade unions. In Russia and the Ukraine they number about four million. The overwhelming majority of them are for the state power of the proletariat, for proletarian dictatorship. Two hundred thousand and four million—such is the ratio of the "gear wheels", if one may so express it. Then follow the *tens of millions* of peasants, who are divided into three main groups: the most numerous and the one standing closest to the proletariat is that of the semi-proletarians or poor peasants, then come the middle peasants, and lastly the numerically very small group of kulaks or rural bourgeoisie.

As long as it is possible to trade in grain and to make profit out of famine, the peasant will remain (and this will for some time be inevitable under the dictatorship of the proletariat) a semi-working man, a semi-profitier. As a profitier he is hostile to us, hostile to the proletarian state, he is inclined to agree with the bourgeoisie and their faithful lackeys, up to and including the Menshevik Sherr or the Socialist Revolutionary B. Chernenkov, who stand for freedom to trade in grain. But *as a working man*, the peasant is a friend of the proletarian state, a most loyal ally of the worker in the struggle against the landowner and against the capitalist. As working men, the peasants, the vast mass of them, the peasant millions, support the state "machine" which is headed by the one or two hundred thousand Communists of the proletarian vanguard, and which consists of millions of organised proletarians.

A state more democratic, in the true sense of the word, one more closely connected with the working and exploited people, has *never yet existed*.

It is precisely proletarian work such as that put into "communist subbotniks" that will win the complete respect and love of peasants for the proletarian state. Such work

and such work alone will completely convince the peasant that we are right, that communism is right, and make him our devoted ally, and, hence, will lead to the complete elimination of our food difficulties, to the complete victory of communism over capitalism in the matter of the production and distribution of grain, to the unqualified consolidation of communism.

June 28, 1919

Collected Works.
Vol. 29, pp. 400-404

FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF THE OLD SOCIAL SYSTEM TO THE CREATION OF THE NEW

Our newspaper^{*} is devoted to the problem of communist labour

This is the paramount problem in the building of socialism. First of all, we must make it quite clear to ourselves that this question *could* be raised in a practical way only after the proletariat had captured political power, only after the landowners and capitalists had been expropriated, only after the proletariat, having captured state power, had achieved decisive victories over the exploiters who put up a desperate resistance and organised counter revolutionary rebellions and civil war.

It seemed that the time had arrived early in 1918—and it had indeed arrived after the February (1918) military campaign of German imperialism against Russia. But on that occasion the period was so short lived; a new and more powerful wave of counter revolutionary rebellions and invasions swept over us so quickly, that the Soviet government had no opportunity to devote itself at all closely and persistently to problems of peaceful development.

We have now passed through two years of unprecedented and incredible difficulties, two years of famine, privation, and distress, accompanied by the unprecedented victories of the Red Army over the hordes of international capitalist reaction.

Today there are serious grounds for hoping (if the French capitalists do not incite Poland to make war on us) that we shall get a more durable and lasting peace.

During these two years we have acquired some experience in organisation on the basis of socialism. That is why we can, and should, get right down to the problem of commu-

nist labour, or rather, it would be more correct to say, not communist, but socialist labour, for we are dealing not with the higher, but the lower, the primary stage of development of the new social system that is growing out of capitalism.

Communist labour in the narrower and stricter sense of the term is labour performed gratis for the benefit of society, labour performed not as a definite duty, not for the purpose of obtaining a right to certain products, not according to previously established and legally fixed quotas, but voluntary labour, irrespective of quotas, it is labour performed without expectation of reward, without reward as a condition, labour performed because it has become a habit to work for the common good, and because of a conscious realisation (that has become a habit) of the necessity of working for the common good—labour as the requirement of a healthy organ-

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It must be clear to everybody that we, i.e., our society, our social system, are still a very long way from the application of *this* form of labour on a broad, really mass scale.

But the very fact that this question has been raised, and raised both by the whole of the advanced proletariat (the Communist Party and the trade unions) and by the state authorities, is a step in this direction.

To achieve big things we must start with little things.

On the other hand, after the "big things", after the revolution which overthrew capitalist ownership and placed the proletariat in power, the organisation of economic life on the *new* basis *can* only start from *little* things.

Subbotniks, labour armies, labour conscription—these are the practical realisation of socialist and communist labour in various forms

This practical realisation still suffers from numerous defects. Only people who are totally incapable of thinking, if we leave aside the champions of capitalism, can laugh scornfully (or rage) at them.

Defects, mistakes, blunders in such a new, difficult and great undertaking are inevitable. Those who are afraid of the difficulties of building socialism, those who allow themselves to be scared by them, those who give way to despair or cowardly dismay, are no socialists.

It will take many years, decades, to create a new labour discipline, new forms of social ties between people, and new forms and methods of drawing people into labour.

It is a most gratifying and noble work

It is our good fortune that, by overthrowing the bourgeoisie and suppressing its resistance, we have been able to win the ground on which this work *has become possible*

And we will set about this work with all our might. Perseverance, persistence, willingness, determination and ability to test things a hundred times, to correct them a hundred times, but to achieve the goal come what may—these are qualities which the proletariat acquired in the course of the ten, fifteen or twenty years that preceded the October Revolution, and which it has acquired in the two years that have passed since this revolution, years of unprecedented privation, hunger, ruin and destitution. These qualities of the proletariat are a guarantee that the proletariat will conquer

April 8, 1920

Kommunistichesky Subbotnik,
April 11, 1920
Signed *N. Lenin*

Collected Works,
Vol. 30, pp. 516-518

**FROM THE FIRST SUBBOTNIK
ON THE MOSCOW KAZAN RAILWAY
TO THE ALL RUSSIA
MAY DAY SUBBOTNIK**

The distance indicated in the above title has been covered in a single year. This is an enormous distance. Although all our subbotniks are still weak, and each subbotnik reveals a host of defects in arrangement, organisation and discipline, the main thing has been done. A heavy and ponderous mass has been shifted, and that is the essence of the matter.

We are not deceiving ourselves in the least about the little that has yet been done and about the infinite amount of work that has yet to be done, however, only malicious enemies of the working people, only malicious supporters of the bourgeoisie, can treat the May 1 subbotnik with disdain, only the most contemptible people, who have irrevocably sold themselves to the capitalists, can condemn the utilisation of the great First of May festival for a mass scale attempt to introduce communist labour.

This is the very first time since the overthrow of the tsars, the landowners and the capitalists that the ground is being cleared for the actual building of socialism, for the development of new social links, a new discipline of work in common and a new national (and later an international) system of economy of world historic importance. This is a matter of transforming the very habits of the people, habits which were, and for a long time to come will be, defiled and debased by the accursed private ownership of the means of production, and also by the entire atmosphere of bickering, distrust, enmity, disunity and mutual intrigue that is inevitably generated—and constantly regenerated—by petty individual economy, the economy of private owners in conditions of "free" exchange among them. For hundreds of years, freedom of trade and of exchange has been to millions of people

the supreme gospel of economic wisdom, the most deep rooted habit of hundreds and hundreds of millions of people. This freedom is just as utterly false, serving to mask capitalist deception, coercion and exploitation, as are the other "freedoms" proclaimed and implemented by the bourgeoisie, such as the "freedom to work" (actually the freedom to starve), and so on.

In the main we have broken irrevocably with this "freedom" of the property owner to be a property owner, with this "freedom" of capital to exploit labour, and we shall finish the job. We are combating its remnants ruthlessly, with all our might.

Down with the old social links, the old economic relations, the old "freedom" of labour (*subordinated to capital*), the old laws, the old habits!

Let us build a new society!

We were not daunted by defeats during the great revolutionary war against tsarism, against the bourgeoisie, against the omnipotent imperialist world powers.

We shall not be daunted by the gigantic difficulties and by the errors that are inevitable at the outset of a most difficult task, the transformation of all labour habits and customs requires decades. We solemnly and firmly promise one another that we shall make every sacrifice, that we shall hold out and win in this most arduous struggle—the struggle against the force of habit—that we shall work indefatigably for years and decades. We shall work to do away with the accursed maxim "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost", the habit of looking upon work merely as a duty, and of considering rightful only that work which is paid for at certain rates. We shall work to inculcate in people's minds, turn into a habit, and bring into the day by day life of the masses, the rule "All for each and each for all"; the rule "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs", we shall work for the gradual but steady introduction of communist discipline and communist labour.

We have shifted a huge mountain, a huge mass of conservatism, ignorance, stubborn adherence to the habits of 'freedom of trade' and of the "free" buying and selling of human labour power like any other commodity. We have begun to undermine and destroy the most deep rooted prejudices, the firmest, age long and ingrained habits. In a single year our

subbotniks have made an immense stride forward. They are still infinitely weak, but that will not daunt us. We have seen our 'infinitely weak' Soviet state before our very eyes gaining strength and becoming a mighty world force as a result of our own efforts. We shall work for years and decades practising subbotniks, developing them, spreading them, improving them and converting them into a habit. We shall achieve the victory of communist labour.

Perovskiy Subbotnik
May 2, 1920
Signed A. Lenin

Collected Works
Vol. 31 pp. 125-126

HOW TO ORGANISE COMPETITION!

Bourgeois authors have been using up reams of paper praising competition, private enterprise, and all the other magnificent virtues and blessings of the capitalists and the capitalist system. Socialists have been accused of refusing to understand the importance of these virtues, and of ignoring "human nature." As a matter of fact, however, capitalism long ago replaced small, independent commodity production, under which competition could develop enterprise, energy and bold initiative to any *considerable* extent, by large and very large scale factory production, joint stock companies, syndicates and other monopolies. Under *such* capitalism, competition means the incredibly brutal suppression of the enterprise, energy and bold initiative of the *mass* of the population, of its overwhelming majority, of ninety nine out of every hundred toilers, it also means that competition is replaced by financial fraud, nepotism, servility on the upper rungs of the social ladder.

Far from extinguishing competition, socialism, on the contrary, for the first time creates the opportunity for employing it on a really *wide* and on a really *mass* scale, for actually drawing the majority of working people into a field of labour in which they can display their abilities, develop the capacities, and reveal those talents, so abundant among the people whom capitalism crushed, suppressed and strangled in thousands and millions.

Now that a socialist government is in power our task is to organise competition.

The hangers on and spongers on the bourgeoisie described socialism as a uniform, routine, monotonous and drab bar rack system. The lackeys of the money bags, the lickspittles of the exploiters, the bourgeois intellectual gentlemen used socialism as a bogey to "frighten" the people, who, under capitalism, were doomed to the penal servitude and the bar rack like discipline of arduous, monotonous toil, to a life of dire poverty and semi starvation. The first step towards the emancipation of the people from this penal servitude is the confiscation of the landed estates, the introduction of workers' control and the nationalisation of the banks. The next steps will be the nationalisation of the factories, the compulsory organisation of the whole population in consumers' societies, which are at the same time societies for the sale of products, and the state monopoly of the trade in grain and other necessities.

Only now is the opportunity created for the truly mass display of enterprise, competition and bold initiative. Every factory from which the capitalist has been ejected, or in which he has at least been curbed by genuine workers' control, every village from which the landowning exploiter has been smoked out and his land confiscated has only now become a field in which the working man can reveal his talents, unbend his back a little, rise to his full height, and feel that he is a human being. For the first time after centuries of working for others, of forced labour for the exploiter, it has become possible to *work for oneself* and moreover to employ all the achievements of modern technology and culture in one's work.

Of course, this greatest change in human history from working under compulsion to working for oneself cannot take place without friction, difficulties, conflicts and violence against the inveterate parasites and their hangers on. No worker has any illusions on that score. The workers and poor peasants, hardened by dire want and by many long years of slave labour for the exploiters, by their countless insults and acts of violence, realise that it will take time to *break* the resistance of those exploiters. The workers and peasants are not in the least infected with the sentimental illusions of the intellectual gentlemen, of the *Novaya Zhizn*'s crowd and other slush, who "shouted" themselves hoarse "denouncing" the capitalists and "gesticulated" against them, only to burst into tears and to behave like whipped puppies.

when it came to *deeds*, to putting threats into action, to carrying out in practice the work of *removing* the capitalists

The great change from working under compulsion to working for oneself, to labour planned and organised on a gigantic, national (and to a certain extent international, world) scale, also requires—in addition to “military” measures for the suppression of the exploiters’ resistance—tremendous *organisational*, organising effort on the part of the proletariat and the poor peasants. The organisational task is interwoven to form a single whole with the task of ruthlessly suppressing by military methods yesterday’s slave owners (capitalists) and their packs of lackeys—the bourgeois intellectual gentlemen. Yesterday’s slave owners and their “intellectual” stooges say and think, “We have always been organisers and chiefs. We have commanded, and we want to continue doing so. We shall refuse to obey the ‘common people’, the workers and peasants. We shall not submit to them. We shall convert knowledge into a weapon for the defence of the privileges of the money bags and of the rule of capital over the people.”

That is what the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intellectuals say, think, and do. From the point of view of *self interest* their behaviour is comprehensible. The hangers on and spongers on the feudal landowners, the priests, the scribes, the bureaucrats as Gogol depicted them, and the “intellectuals” who hated Belinsky, also found it “hard” to part with serfdom. But the cause of the exploiters and of their “intellectual” menials is hopeless. The workers and peasants are beginning to break down their resistance—unfortunately, not yet firmly, resolutely and ruthlessly enough—and *break it down they will*.

“They” think that the “common people”, the “common” workers and poor peasants, will be unable to cope with the great, truly heroic, in the world historic sense of the word, organisational tasks which the socialist revolution has imposed upon the working people. The intellectuals who are accustomed to serving the capitalists and the capitalist state say in order to console themselves “You cannot do without us.” But their insolent assumption has no truth in it, educated men are already making their appearance on the side of the people, on the side of the working people, and are helping to break the resistance of the servants of capital. There are a

great many talented organisers among the peasants and the working class, and they are only just beginning to become aware of themselves, to awaken, to stretch out towards great, vital creative work, to tackle with their own forces the task of building socialist society

One of the most important tasks today, if not the most important, is to develop this independent initiative of the workers, and of all the working and exploited people generally, develop it as widely as possible in creative *organisational* work. At all costs we must break the old, *absurd*, *savage*, *despicable* and *disgusting* prejudice that only the so-called "upper classes", only the rich, and those who have gone through the school of the rich, are capable of administering the state and directing the organisational development of socialist society

This is a prejudice fostered by rotten routine, by petrified views, slavish habits, and still more by the sordid selfishness of the capitalists, in whose interest it is to administer while plundering and to plunder while administering. The workers will not forget for a moment that they need the power of knowledge. The extraordinary striving after knowledge which the workers reveal, particularly now, shows that mistaken ideas about this do not and cannot exist among the proletariat. But every *rank-and-file* worker and peasant who can read and write, who can judge people and has practical experience, is capable of *organisational* work. Among the "common people", of whom the bourgeois intellectuals speak with such haughtiness and contempt, there are *many* such men and women. This sort of talent among the working class and the peasants is a rich and still untapped source

The workers and peasants are still "timid", they have not yet become accustomed to the idea that *they* are now the *ruling* class, they are not yet resolute enough. The revolution could not *at one stroke* instill these qualities into millions and millions of people who all their lives had been compelled by want and hunger to work under the threat of the stick. But the Revolution of October 1917 is strong, viable and invincible because it *awakens* these qualities, breaks down the old impediments, removes the worn-out shackles, and leads the working people on to the road of the *independent* creation of a new life.

Accounting and control—this is the *main* economic task of

every Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, of every consumers' society, of every union or committee of supplies, of every factory committee or organ of workers' control in general

We must fight against the old habit of regarding the measure of labour and the means of production from the point of view of the slave whose sole aim is to lighten the burden of labour or to obtain at least some little bit *from the bourgeoisie*. The advanced, class conscious workers have already started this fight, and they are offering determined resistance to the newcomers who flocked to the factory world in particularly large numbers during the war and who now would like to treat the *people's* factory, the factory that has come into the possession of the people, in the old way, with the sole aim of "snatching the biggest possible piece of the pie and clearing out". All the class conscious, honest and thinking peasants and working people will take their place in this fight by the side of the advanced workers

Accounting and control, if carried on by the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies as the supreme state power, or on the instructions, on the authority, of *this* power—widespread, general, universal accounting and control, the accounting and control of the amount of labour performed and of the distribution of products—is the *essence* of socialist transformation, once the political rule of the proletariat has been established and secured

The accounting and control essential for the transition to socialism can be exercised only by the people. Only the voluntary and conscientious co operation of the *mass* of the workers and peasants in accounting and controlling *the rich, the rogues, the idlers and the rowdies*, a co operation marked by revolutionary enthusiasm, can conquer these survivals of accursed capitalist society, these dregs of humanity, these hopelessly decayed and atrophied limbs, this contagion, this plague, this ulcer that socialism has inherited from capitalism

Workers and peasants, working and exploited people! The land, the banks and the factories have now become the property of the entire people! You *yourselves* must set to work to take account of and control the production and distribution of products—this, and this *alone* is the road to the victory of socialism, the only guarantee of its victory, the guarantee

of victory over all exploitation, over all poverty and want! For there is enough bread, iron, timber, wool, cotton and flax in Russia to satisfy the needs of everyone, if only labour and its products are properly distributed, if only a *business like, practical* control over this distribution by the entire people is established, provided only we can defeat the enemies of the people the rich and their hangers on, and the rogues, the idlers and the rowdies, *not only* in politics, but also in *everyday economic* life

No mercy for these enemies of the people, the enemies of socialism, the enemies of the working people! War to the death against the rich and their hangers on, the bourgeois intellectuals, war on the rogues, the idlers and the rowdies! All of them are of the same brood—the spawn of capitalism, the offspring of aristocratic and bourgeois society, the society in which a handful of men robbed and insulted the people, the society in which poverty and want forced thousands and thousands on to the path of rowdyism, corruption and roguery, and caused them to lose all human semblance. the society which inevitably cultivated in the working man the desire to escape exploitation even by means of deception, to wriggle out of it, to escape, if only for a moment, from loathsome labour, to procure at least a crust of bread by any possible means, at any cost, so as not to starve, so as to subdue the pangs of hunger suffered by himself and by his near ones

The rich and the rogues are two sides of the same coin, they are the two principal categories of *parasites* which capitalism fostered, they are the principal enemies of socialism. These enemies must be placed under the special surveillance of the entire people, they must be ruthlessly punished for the slightest violation of the laws and regulations of socialist society. Any display of weakness, hesitation or sentimentality in this respect would be an immense crime against socialism

In order to render these parasites harmless to socialist society we must organise the accounting and control of the amount of work done and of production and distribution by the entire people, by millions and millions of workers and peasants, participating voluntarily, energetically and with revolutionary enthusiasm. And in order to organise this accounting and control, which is *fully within the ability* of every honest, intelligent and efficient worker and peasant,

we must rouse their organising talent, the talent that is to be found in their midst, we must rouse among them—and organise on a national scale—*competition* in the sphere of organisational achievement, the workers and peasants must be brought to see clearly the difference between the necessary advice of an educated man and the necessary control by the “common” worker and peasant of the *slovenliness* that is so usual among the “educated”

This slovenliness, this carelessness, untidiness, unpunctuality, nervous haste, the inclination to substitute discussion for action, talk for work, the inclination to undertake every thing under the sun without finishing anything, are characteristics of the “educated”, and this is not due to the fact that they are bad by nature, still less is it due to their evil will, it is due to all their habits of life, the conditions of their work, to fatigue, to the abnormal separation of mental from manual labour, and so on, and so forth

Among the mistakes, shortcomings and defects of our revolution a by no means unimportant place is occupied by the mistakes, etc., which are due to these deplorable—but at present inevitable—characteristics of the intellectuals in our midst, and to the *lack* of sufficient supervision by the *workers* over the *organisational* work of the intellectuals

The workers and peasants are still “timid”, they must get rid of this timidity, and they *certainly* will get rid of it. We cannot dispense with the advice, the instruction of educated people, of intellectuals and specialists. Every sensible worker and peasant understands this perfectly well, and the intellectuals in our midst cannot complain of a lack of attention and comradely respect on the part of the workers and peasants. Advice and instruction, however, is one thing, and the organisation of *practical* accounting and control is another. Very often the intellectuals give excellent advice and instruction, but they prove to be ridiculously, *absurdly*, shamefully “unhandy” and incapable of *carrying out* this advice and instruction, of exercising *practical control* over the translation of words into deeds.

In this very respect it is utterly impossible to dispense with the help and the *leading role* of the practical organisers from among the “people”, from among the factory workers and working peasants. “It is not the gods who make pots”—this is the truth that the workers and peasants should get

well drilled into their minds. They must understand that the whole thing now is *practical work*, that the theoretical movement has arrived when theory is being transformed into practice, witnessed the practice corrected by practice, tested by practice, when the words of Marx, "Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes" ⁽¹⁾ become particularly true—every step in reality counting in practice, restricting, fully respecting the rich and the poor, and keeping them under control is worth more than a dozen excellent arguments about socialism. For "theory, my friend, is poor, but *praxis* is the eternal truth of life" ⁽²⁾

Communism must be arranged between practical organisers from among the workers and peasants. Every attempt to establish stereotyped forms and to impose uniformity from above, as intellectuals are so inclined to do, must be combated. Stereotyped forms and uniformity imposed from above have nothing in common with democratic and socialist centralism. The unity of essentials of fundamentals of the substance is not disturbed but covered by *various* in details in specific local features, in methods of approach, in methods of exercising control, in ways of estimating and rendering harmless the parasites (the rich and the rogues, slowly and historically intellectuals etc. etc.)

The Paris Commune gave a great example of how to combine initiative, independence, freedom of action and without from above with voluntary centralism from above stereotyped forms. Our Soviets are following the same road. But they are still 'timid' they have not yet got into their stride, have not yet 'broken into' their new great, creative task of building the socialist system. The Soviets must set to work more boldly and display greater initiative. All "communes"—factories, villages, consumers' societies, and committees of supplies—must *unite* with each other as practical organisers of accounting and control of labour and distribution of products. The programme of this accounting and control is simple, clear and intelligible to all—everyone to have bread, everyone to have sound footwear and good clothing; everyone to have warm dwellings; everyone to work conscientiously and a single rogue (including those who shirk their work) to be allowed to be at liberty, but kept in prison or serve his sentence of compulsory labour of the hardest kind, not a single rich man who violates the laws and regulations of socialism to be allowed to escape the fate of the rogue.

which should, in justice, be the fate of the rich man "He who does not work, neither shall he eat"—this is the *practical* commandment of socialism This is how things should be organised *practically* These are the *practical* successes our "communes" and our worker and peasant organisers should be proud of And this applies particularly to the organisers among the intellectuals (*particularly*, because they are *too much, far too much* in the habit of being proud of their general instructions and resolutions)

Thousands of practical forms and methods of accounting and controlling the rich, the rogues and the idlers must be devised and put to a practical test by the communes themselves, by small units in town and country Variety is a guarantee of effectiveness here, a pledge of success in achieving the single common aim—to *clean* the land of Russia of all vermin, of fleas—the rogues, of bugs—the rich, and so on and so forth In one place half a score of rich, a dozen rogues, half a dozen workers who shirk their work (in the manner of rowdies, the manner in which many composers in Petrograd, particularly in the Party printing shops, shirk their work) will be put in prison In another place they will be put to cleaning latrines In a third place they will be provided with "yellow tickets" after they have served their time, so that everyone shall keep an eye on them, as *harmful* persons, until they reform In a fourth place, one out of every ten idlers will be shot on the spot In a fifth place mixed methods may be adopted, and by probational release, for example, the rich, the bourgeois intellectuals, the rogues and rowdies who are corrigible will be given an opportunity to reform quickly The more variety there will be, the better and richer will be our general experience, the more certain and rapid will be the success of socialism, and the easier will it be for practice to devise—for only practice can devise—the *best* methods and means of struggle

In what commune, in what district of a large town, in what factory and in what village are there *no* starving people, *no* unemployed, *no* idle rich, *no* despicable lackeys of the bourgeoisie, saboteurs who call themselves intellectuals? Where has most been done to raise the productivity of labour, to build good new houses for the poor, to put the poor in the houses of the rich, to regularly provide a bottle of milk for every child of every poor family? It is on these points that *competition* should develop between the communes,

communities, producer consumers' societies and associations, and Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. This is the work in which *talented organisers* should come to the fore *in practice* and be promoted to work in state administration. There is a great deal of talent among the people. It is merely suppressed. It must be given an opportunity to display itself. *It and it alone*, with the support of the people, can save Russia and save the cause of socialism.

Written December 24-27, 1917
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First published in *Pravda* No. 17,
January 20, 1929
Signed *V. Lenin*

Collected Works,
Vol. 26, pp. 404-415

NOTES

¹ This refers to the plot to surrender Petrograd that was led by the "national centre", counter revolutionary organisation that united the activities of anti Soviet and spy groups. On June 13, 1919, the conspirators raised a revolt at the Krasnaya Gorka (Red Hill) Fort, a strategic point at the approaches to Petrograd.

The revolt was led by the fort's commandant Neklyudov, former lieutenant of the tsarist army. His followers rose up in revolt at the Seraya Loshad (Grey Horse) and Obruchev Forts. By capturing the Krasnaya Gorka Fort the conspirators planned to undermine the Kronstadt defences and by timing their revolt to coincide with the general offensive at the front to seize Petrograd.

The revolt was quickly suppressed by the joint forces of the coast guard troops, the Baltic Navy ships and volunteer detachments. The Red Army troops recaptured the Krasnaya Gorka Fort on the night of June 15. The counter revolutionary organisation that had hatched up the revolt was exposed and liquidated.

p 12

² The Second (Berne) International was founded at a conference of socialist parties in Berne in February 1919 as a substitute for the Second International that had ceased to exist with the outbreak of World War I. The Berne International in fact defended the interests of the international bourgeoisie and was called by Lenin "the really yellow International" (*Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 29, p 311).

p 14

³ *Sudlowa*—a village in Bohemia near the town of Hradec Kralove, Czechoslovakia, where a battle was fought on July 3, 1866, which ended in the victory of the Prussian over the Austrian forces and settled the outcome of the Austro Prussian war.

p 17

⁴ This refers to the Party Programme adopted at the Eighth Congress of the R.C.P (B).

p 20

⁵ See Karl Marx, *Capital*, Moscow, 1959, Vol I, p 302.

p 21

⁶ By a decree of the Council of People's Commissars of March 16, 1919, the consumers' co operatives were reorganised into a single distribution body under the name of "consumers' communes". This name, how

ever, led to a misunderstanding of the decree in some districts. In view of this the All Russia Central Executive Committee, while approving the decree in its decision "On Workers' and Peasants' Consumer Societies" of June 30, 1919, changed the name from "consumers' communes" to "consumers' societies", a name to which the public were accustomed. (See *Izvestia UTsIK* No 143, July 3, 1919) p 24

⁷ See Lenin, *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol 29, pp 276-79 p 26

⁸ Lenin refers to the newspaper *Kommunistichesky Subbotnik* (Communist Saturday), the only issue of which was published on April 11, 1920 on the initiative of the Moscow Committee of the RCP(B). The newspaper was issued by the editorial staff workers of the Moscow newspapers and the ROSTA telegraph agency during their voluntary work on Saturday, April 10, 1920 p 28

⁹ The reference is to internationalist Mensheviks who supported *Noyaya Zhizn*

Noyaya Zhizn—a daily newspaper published in Petrograd from April 18 (May 1), 1917 to July 1918. Internationalist Mensheviks and writers who supported the policy of the magazine *Letopis* (Chronicle) came out as its initiators. The newspaper took a hostile attitude to the October Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet power. From June 1, 1918 onwards the newspaper was published in Petrograd and in Moscow. Both editions were suppressed in July 1918 p 35

¹⁰ See Karl Marx, Letter to Wilhelm Bracke of May 5, 1875 (Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1965, p 296) p 41

¹¹ A quotation from Goethe's *Faust*, Part One, Scene 4—Faust's study p. 41

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на английском языке